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Leadership Development
Program in
Vocational Special
Needs Education

Illinois
State Board of
Education

Adult
Vocational and
Technical Education

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Purpose

The Leadership Development Program (LDP) was initiated in July, 1983 in response to the increased participation of handicapped and disadvantaged youth in regular vocational programs at the secondary and post-secondary level. Specifically, the program was begun to assist local administrators, coordinators, and teachers in improving vocational education programs and services for special needs youth and adults. As a direct outcome of the program, the participants are engaged in planning and conducting a program improvement project (involving new curriculum or program development, or inservice training for staff or parents) on behalf of the disadvantaged, handicapped, or limited English proficient students in their school district, community college, or specialized agency.

Each year the program provides leadership training to professionals in a different region of the state. Over the next two years, the LDP will be serving individuals and participating local education rehabilitation agencies in the central, northwestern, and southern regions of Illinois. Specifically, the program serves professionals (including administrators, supervisors, counselors, and instructors) from vocational education, special education, general secondary education, as well as corrections, mental health, vocational rehabilitation, and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) agencies.

Participants selected for the program are also eligible to receive graduate credit from the University of Illinois.

During 1984-85 the program will serve professionals in the central and north eastern regions of Illinois. In 1985-86, the program will be moved to southern Illinois.

The Program

During the months of June, July and August, the participants complete two 48-hour workshops conducted by faculty members from the University of Illinois. These workshops focus upon two major topics: vocational programming for special needs learners; and directing personnel development and program improvement in the schools. Included in the first workshop are topics such as vocational assessment, job development, modification of curriculum and teaching strategies, individualized vocational education plans, and collaboration with community agencies and employers. The second workshop assists the participants in developing an Action Plan for their program improvement project to be conducted during the upcoming school year. Topics covered include: inservice training, program improvement issues, effective schools research, leadership theory, and action planning.

Throughout the school year, four 2-day seminars are held to provide further training for the participants. These seminars are planned by the participants and address topics of major interest. Further, they allow the participants the opportunity to observe innovative programs and interact with students and staff. For example, during 1983-84 seminars were held at Triton College and the Lake County Area Vocational Center and focused on the topics of vocational assessment, collaboration with business and industry, and exemplary programs at the secondary and post-secondary level. Also, in October, 1983, one seminar was held in Des Plaines in conjunction with the International Conference on Career Development and Vocational Education for Handicapped/Special Needs Individuals.



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Benefits of Participation

- Gain current information regarding trends, new practices, and innovative vocational programs for special needs youth and adults.
- Have the opportunity to observe exemplary programs located throughout Illinois in community colleges, area vocational centers, rehabilitation facilities, and high schools.
- Develop leadership skills and experience in planning and conducting program improvement or inservice training projects.
- Interact and work closely with professionals from other allied fields (such as vocational rehabilitation, vocational education, and special education).
- Become involved in reviewing and strengthening the vocational programs and services for special needs students currently provided in your school district, community college, special education cooperative, high school, or rehabilitation agency.
- Gain up to 16 hours of graduate credit.
- Become an active member of a statewide network of professionals concerned with improving vocational programs and services for special needs youth and adults.

Program Improvement Projects

The major outcome of the LDP is improvement and expansion of the programs and services for special needs populations attending the schools of the participants. Listed below are brief descriptions of selected projects completed by the participants in 1983-84.

- At the Wilco Area Career Center, a brief handbook was developed to assist the vocational teachers in identifying and serving learning disabled students in their classes. The handbook was developed by an informal committee of vocational and special education teachers. An inservice workshop was conducted to orient staff to the use of the handbook.
- At Thornton Community College, a Secondary-Postsecondary Articulation Task Force was begun. This group, composed of the counselors from the community college and representatives of 10 local high schools, meets regularly to identify students with special needs planning to enter Thornton, identify and handle curriculum articulation needs, improve the support services provided by the College to special students, and identify workshops needed by staff.
- Staff from the Northwest Suburban Special Education Organization expanded their Transitional Workshop program to serve 30 mildly and moderately handicapped youth. This program provides vocational assessment and community-based career exploration experiences for handicapped youth experiencing difficulties in the regular high school programs. A local access cable TV program was produced to describe the purpose and impact of the Transitional Workshop program.

- At Wheeling High School, the program improvement activities focused on developing an independent living skills curriculum. A follow-up survey of former EMH students was conducted and interviews were held with parents to determine the specific unmet needs of former handicapped students. An Independent Living Curriculum was then developed and added to the program beginning in 1984-85.
- Special education and industrial education teachers from North Chicago Community High School completed a training analysis of the industrial arts courses. This analysis identified the following components of each industrial arts course: entrance criteria (e.g., physical skills, math skills, reading skills, and communication skills); vocational skills; safety instruction; needed work behaviors; teaching techniques used; and support services needed to mainstream mildly handicapped students.
- Staff from the Kendall County Special Education Cooperative developed a Local Vocational Education Plan for the cooperative. This plan has led to additional state funding and the establishment of a new, comprehensive vocational program for mildly handicapped students.



Impact

The LDP program is having impact on programs and services in a variety of ways. The first year participants completed program improvement activities that directly effected some 300 to 400 special needs students. The reports and products developed at the local level (handbooks, videotapes, curriculum outlines, training analysis forms, etc.) have been abstracted for dissemination and are available through the Illinois Vocational Curriculum Center. Inservice training, both formal and informal in design, has been conducted in 12 of the 20 participating schools during 1983-84. Four schools plan to conduct additional, follow-up inservice training during 1984-85 related to their program improvement project.

The first edition of the *Illinois Directory of Vocational Special Needs Personnel* has been produced, and includes information describing the positions and responsibilities of some 70 professionals, including all LDP participants. Over the next year, additional editions of the Directory will be developed. A statewide conference is tentatively planned for Spring, 1985 to enhance the networking of vocational special needs educators in Illinois.



Further Information

Persons interested in obtaining information about the program or the Program Improvement Projects that have been undertaken can contact:

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